

Prairie Farm Assistance Act

Mr. Gardiner: Approximately 1,400 families moved just prior to or in the early part of the war. Not many moved during the war period, for the obvious reason that the people who would want to move were not there. They were overseas, or somewhere else. It was mostly the young people who moved. They were not around during the war. They are back now. One of the things we should be very careful about is settling them in the area that they left rather than settling them somewhere else. We have been very careful about that. As I recall it, the first ruling that was made by the veterans organization was that people could not go into those areas at all. They would not agree to a favourable return with regard to applications that were made for lands in those areas.

Some of the members who have been speaking, including myself, have urged upon the Department of Veterans Affairs that they consider the fact that these people want to settle alongside their parents. Most of the places are in that category. Many members—not all of them are here now—who were in the house at that time would write me about it. I would take it up with Veterans Affairs, trying to insist upon their agreeing that these lands were good enough for the men to settle on. Some of us had to draw on our imagination in order to say that, but we were being kind. We were trying to be as kindly as we could toward them, trying to make it possible for them to get settled again near home. I say that we do not object to that, but it did interfere with the possibility of getting resettlement of these people. We have made arrangements under which we thought we would be right in the middle of resettling people. We purchased the Canada Land and Irrigation holdings in Alberta. The law is slow enough in this country, but we find that it is much slower over on the other side of the ocean. We have been moving heaven and earth to try to get titles to that land cleared, but we cannot speed up the courts over in that country. We do not know when we are going to get them cleared. It may be about the middle of this summer. If we had them cleared we would have been moving people right from the day in the spring that the work could be started. We want the settlers to do all their own work on this land. We do not want to hire a contractor to go in and level the land and do all that kind of thing; we want these people to go there and do it themselves. People appreciate much more a farm that they build themselves than they do one that somebody else has built for them. We want to do that. The delay in securing title is the

[Mr. Wright.]

only thing that held it up. We want to be in a position, just as soon as we possibly can, to move more of them.

Mr. Wright: What the minister has just said is that since the war practically no assisted movement under the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act has taken place. We are only now getting to the point where the movement that was in fact taking place prior to the war is again becoming operative. He mentioned that with regard to the irrigated area in Alberta agreements are being reached. Will people now living in Saskatchewan in these submarginal areas be given the opportunity to move to Alberta, or will the irrigation project be used entirely for the people of Alberta from the drought areas? Has progress been made in reaching an agreement with the Saskatchewan government with respect to the area in northeastern Saskatchewan of some 200,000 acres that is being removed this year from forest reserve and being made available for settlement and agricultural purposes?

Mr. Gardiner: Replying to the first question, the Alberta government itself is opening up an area a little larger than that of Canada Land and Irrigation. It is all part of one scheme. We are assisting by widening the ditch and making it possible for them to get water. They are going to utilize that for the Alberta people, giving a preference to returned men. In the other area we can bring in people from anywhere. Our intention is that they will come only from submarginal areas, but they may come from Saskatchewan, Manitoba or any part of Alberta.

The answer to the last question is that no agreement has been entered into up to the present.

Mr. Fair: What is the position with respect to land homesteaded twenty, thirty or forty years ago, disposed of by sale by the government, and then, for non-payment of taxes, reverting to the government and being disposed of since December 31, 1940?

Mr. Gardiner: Any land that was homesteaded or sold prior to December 31, 1940, is eligible under this act, unless it was cultivated and abandoned. If it was once cultivated and abandoned it is not eligible. But this amendment does not affect that; that provision is in the act as it was.

Mr. Charlton: What is the position of a co-operative farm which was established prior to the passage of this act but which will not be approved by the board?

Mr. Gardiner: It is already provided that those co-operative farms are in. That has